NABARRO NATHANSON

NEWS RELEASE

2 November 1998

LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD USE COMPULSORY PURCHASE POWERS TO KICK-START URBAN REGENERATION, SAYS LEADING PLANNING LAWYER

Local authorities should use their compulsory purchase powers to kick-start run-down industrial areas, even if they have yet to finalise plans to redevelop the area, according to a leading local authority lawyer.

David Hawkins, head of planning at national firm Nabarro Nathanson, says a recent decision by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, confirms that local authorities have the power to take a lead in redeveloping 'brown field' sites.

In late September, the Secretary of State confirmed Medway Council could compulsorily purchase land at Rochester Riverside in Kent. The 80-acre site was largely derelict, and several businesses had rejected the Council's offers to buy them out. They had contested the council's powers to compulsorily purchase their land because the Council had not finalised plans to redevelop the area. The Secretary of State rejected their arguments following a public inquiry.

David Hawkins says the decision should act as a spur for local authorities troubled by derelict areas. "Rochester Riverside displayed the classic signs of industrial decline, with fragmented land ownership, poor facilities and low-grade use. It was clear that the private sector would be unwilling to redevelop the area unless the Council was able to take over the entire site first. Importantly, however, the Council did not want to finalise its renewal plans because they wanted to allow the private sector take the lead in redeveloping the area for a mixture of uses. The Secretary of State's decision confirms that the Council's approach was a correct use of it planning powers."

Hawkins says that decision means that Councils can adopt a similar approach to the now-abolished Urban Development Corporations for encouraging regeneration. "UDC's were a genuine public-private partnership. The Corporations assembled run-down sites and provided the infrastructure, but let the private sector take the lead in their redevelopment. The Secretary of State's decision shows that local authorities can follow this approach. Councils should use their compulsory purchase powers to target run-down areas for redevelopment. Once they have cleared up the site, they can allow the private sector to take the lead in its renewal."

Nabarro Nathanson acted for Medway Council.

- Ends -

For further information, please contact:

David Hawkins
Nabarro Nathanson
Tel: 0171-518 3261

or

Chris Hinze or Richard Parnham
Nabarro Nathanson
Tel: 0171-493 9933